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THE FOURTH LIFE OF AMORY BRADFORD

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Amory Bradford, former newspaper executive, creator of the Environmental Protection Agency and now—hang on—gestalt therapist, never lost his connection with his children. When his other connections short-circuited, all five of his children reached out to support him, but for a long time it was inconceivable that tough, brilliant Amory Bradford would ever need anybody but himself.

In 1962, Bradford was 50, vice president and general manager of The New York Times and the epitome of the clockwork cool Establishment, which he mirrored, like the Century Club that he still frequents when in New York. Married to Carole Warburg Rothschild, whose family made a fortune in investment banking and department stores, he always made as much money as his wife earned in interest from her holdings. But money never interested him as much as power, of which he had quite a lot, or as much as control, a more subtle adversary.

"I was an extraordinary success story," conceded Bradford, "in conventional terms."

By 1972, all the conventions had been stripped away. He had left his job, been divorced from his wife, married twice more and was quarreling with his third (soon to be ex-) wife at the time. His closest friend, New York Times publisher Orvil Dryfoos, was dead. In a precedent-making lawsuit (Bradford v. The New York Times) he had lost over a million dollars worth of stock options. And he had become an alcoholic.

One night, in Manhattan, he walked down to the North River at the foot of Bank Street to commit suicide. "It was typical of me to chose the most repugnant way to die, by drowning. I have always had a fear of choking." But Bradford, in a way, had already choked on his own life.

The eldest son of a Vermont Congregational minister (and the first eldest son in four generations to reject the church as a vocation), Bradford said, "I never liked my father's minister friends as much as I liked his lawyer friends. The law was cool, rational. When I was 10, I told him that I wanted to be a lawyer. My father said, 'Well, all right, Amory, if that's your decision. But if you are going to be a lawyer, try to put more into the community than you take out.'"

Bradford proceeded to acquire the perfect résumé to guarantee him permanent access to the mahogany-paneled board rooms of the power elite. Going to Phillips Andover Academy on scholarship, he graduated with highest honors, went on to Yale (where he ran a suit-pressing business to finance his education), Yale Law School, and the blue chip Wall Street law firm of Davis Polk & Wardwell. As Bradford scaled the mountain, every time he needed a piton one seemed to materialize in his hand.

Like most men of gathering importance, Bradford passed through Washington for additional validation: Securities and Exchange Commission business for Davis Polk, a wartime stint in the special branches section of the Pentagon, a job at the State Department. At State he was part of a task force assigned to recommend a peacetime intelligence operation in the government. Bradford recommended that the Central Intelligence Agency, as it has evolved, not be established. Nobody took his advice.

In 1947, Orvil Dryfoos convinced Bradford to leave the law and join the management end of The Times newspaper. Devising a plan to improve the paper's management, Bradford presented it and found his plan more or less ignored. One of nature's more inspired quitters, he took a leave of absence and returned—at Dryfoos' urging—only when his plan was put into effect. Most of the time, Amory Bradford was annoyingly right about things, which was one of the reasons that few lamented his downfall when it came.

"He was arrogant, as befitted his brilliance," said Harrison Salisbury, longtime Times correspondent and chronicler of the paper's politics. "But unlike other men of brilliance who manage to do a soft-shoe around it in the presence of other people, Amory let it shine through."

Bradford agrees. "I was self-consciously arrogant," he said. And what made him feel that he was better than anybody

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else? "Because I was." He smiled.

"Hah!" exclaimed Salisbury when this conversation was relayed to him. "Good for Amory. I'm glad he said that. It wasn't necessarily true, but it shows he still has a strong sense of himself."